



CENTERSTONE

Wellness Program

How to Manage Job Loss Grief

Many hard working adults are noticing that good jobs seem to be going, going, gone - including their own. According to the U.S. Labor Department, 2008 was the worst year for lost jobs in more than six decades. If you or someone you know has been affected by this startling statistic, here are six suggestions to help manage job loss grief.

Acknowledge the Loss

Being downsized can be a major blow to self esteem. Getting over any type of loss takes time. Immediately following any personal crisis, many supportive people tend to jump in offering advice and encouragement without first acknowledging the fears, frustrations and disappointments associated with job loss. For the person affected there is a true loss of identity, structure, routine, sense of control and ideas about the future. There is also a loss of family-like relationships with former co-workers. When a job is lost, part of the individual's sense of self may be lost as well. As a spouse, family member or friend offer honesty yet patience. Expect some tension in the relationship, yet be flexible.

Be an Encourager

This is an opportunity to be their cheerleader! Build them up. Remind your spouse, family member or friend of their greatness, awesome skills, strengths and abilities to overcome this personal challenge. Avoid cliché advice that minimizes the loss. Self blame is likely when facing sudden losses, so be an encourager. Talk openly with them. They may be so beaten up that they can't see beyond the present. You can offer emotional strength and let your support pour into their perhaps shattered life.

Be on the Same Team

If your spouse, family member or friend is experiencing job loss grief, let them know you are their biggest supporter, and that you will do what it takes to help them get through this transitional time. It may mean agreeing to cut back on spending or freezing funds for non-essentials. Communicate that you are open to lifestyle changes in order minimize burdens on your family. You are in this together. You are on the same team. Try to balance sensitivity of his or her concerns with your own financial and emotional fears of failure.

Join in the Journey

Be another set of eyes and ears during your friend or family member's job search. Learn more about other industries, job outlets and career possibilities. Acknowledge that this could happen again, and help each other think broader. Learn a new skill or consider a new direction. Join them in the journey and know that it is a journey. This time will pass. In the meantime, organize your finances and conduct research through newspapers, the internet or networking.

Take a Break

It is imperative to take care of yourself so that your entire life doesn't unravel. Your body and your spirits will be stressed. It is vital to keep balance in times of turmoil and change. Also, be attentive to other parts of life that were booted to the back burner during this career crisis. Build fun and relaxation into your plans! Just as you are being intentional in being an active supporter and team member through this tough time, it is equally essential to take a break and a breather from your intense efforts.

Just Ask

If all else fails, just ask your spouse, family member or friend how you can help. Ask them what they need. Ask how you can be a source of motivation and strength, and how you can help them manage this time of shock and grief. The person may not ask for help for fear of imposing. When you lend your hand, it will help your friend focus on the task of finding a new job. Also, give them space to refocus, regroup and begin making tough choices to uncover the thick, mud-like blanket thrown over their life.

If you are the person affected by this devastating economic and workforce crisis, know that others care. Ask for help. You are not alone. There are resources in every community to help you manage and even excel in all areas of your life. You can begin today! Handling job loss is not easy, but it can also be a new beginning.

Centerstone (615) 460-HELP (4357)

About Centerstone

Centerstone (www.centerstone.org), a not-for-profit organization is the nation's largest provider of community-based behavioral healthcare. With a history that spans over fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to more than 69,000 individuals of all ages and their families annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs in more than 120 facilities and 150 partnership locations in Tennessee and Indiana. Centerstone is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in Tennessee and The Joint Commission in Indiana. For more information about Centerstone, please call toll free at (888) 291-4357.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.